

LEAN TRAINING PRODUCES FUNCTIONAL PLANT LAYOUT,
SUPPORTS FUTURE GROWTH

ABOUT CONTROL AIR INC. Control Air manufactures precision air pressure regulators, transducers, valve positioners, and related products. What began in 1987 as a three-person company founded by Donald Comstock, is now a global manufacturer with over 50 employees operating out of a 28,000 square foot facility in Amherst, New Hampshire. Donald's son Scott is now the President and CEO of Control Air. The company offers some of the highest performance and quality standards in the market, and serves customers in the medical, process control, automotive, quality systems, chemical, oil and gas industries.

THE CHALLENGE. Scott Comstock was noticing several issues in the Control Air plant requiring attention. The company needed to streamline operations, reduce inventory, and figure out how to maximize the use of an additional 8,500 square feet of space. "Inventory was just sitting there," said Comstock. "We began experiencing delays in delivering our products on time to the customer." Familiar with Lean Manufacturing but unsure of whether it would help Control Air, Comstock reached out to the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP), part of the MEP National Network, to find out what types of training would make sense for the company. He liked what he heard and decided to enlist NH MEP to develop a company-wide training program to meet Control Air's needs.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. NH MEP led Control Air employees through a basic Lean Manufacturing training, covering key topics such as the 8 wastes, plant layout, visual factory, value and non-value added, standardization, 5S workplace organization, and flow and pull. In the coaching and teaching portion of the program, Control Air associates developed a functional flow layout diagram of the 8,500 square foot area. "More continuous flow was needed," explained Comstock. "That extra space was the opportunity we needed to look at the overall layout of our factory, from processes to shipping." The company focused on developing one or two product families and developed a streamlined layout for shipping and receiving, part storage, finished goods, manufacturing areas, and future offices. The training investment had an impact on Control Air markets and jobs, and the company is continuing to apply Lean Manufacturing techniques to ensure its long-term sustainability.

"The Lean training that we received helped erase previous internal resistance to the consideration of different ways to manufacture our product. Specifically the Value Stream Mapping process really opened our eyes to waste in movement, downtime, and excess inventory. We were able to use this knowledge to build a production cell utilizing single piece flow and point-of-use inventory that greatly increased throughput."

-Scott Comstock, President and CEO

RESULTS



Markets impact: **\$75,000**



Jobs impact: **2**



Investment in training:
\$10,000



New products: **\$10,000**



Sustained **25** customer orders

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